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NPIC/OD:ACL:mt  
17 Jan 63

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence  
THROUGH: Deputy Director (Intelligence)  
Executive Director  
SUBJECT: NPIC as an Intelligence Evaluation Mechanism  
REFERENCE: Action Memorandum A-151 from Executive  
Director, dated 8 January 1963

1. In response to referenced memorandum, this paper is offered as a collection of comments and experiences bearing upon the position of NPIC as an intelligence processing mechanism essential to CIA statutory responsibility.

2. As you well know, statutory responsibilities indicate that for the purpose of coordinating the intelligence activities of the several government departments and agencies in the interest of national security it is the duty of CIA to:

a. Advise NSC in matters concerning such intelligence activities as relate to national security.

COMMENT: NPIC and its predecessor organizations within CIA have been involved for almost ten years in major national security problems and it continues to be responsible for the photographic detection and initial description of SovBloc threats to national security which are rapidly reported by the DCI to the President and the National Security Council. The classic P.I. warning

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on 16 October 1962 which launched the "Cuban Crisis" is well known to all. Less well known are the many other warnings of Soviet missile and other military developments and world deployments in the past ten years of cold war which came from photography. The important common ingredient to all of them is that they were discovered or confirmed by NPIC and rapidly reported upward. Without the resources of NPIC these threats at worst could have been missed or delayed in their detection. At best, the reporting or confirmation could have been delayed while the separate P.I. organizations in Army, Navy, Air Force and CIA could complete their reportings and somehow coordinate their findings on many details and combine them in a single warning to be delivered by someone to the President.

With NPIC in full operation these coordination problems have been eliminated or reduced and the Chairman of USIB is not confronted simultaneously with two or more P.I. reports on the same area of threat. Even where there have been major differences on a National Estimate, the minority group has not sustained major disagreement with the joint service type of P.I. reporting provided by the NPIC. This type of disagreement could be grossly more complicated if the many separate details of

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being used to further cross confuse the fundamental differences of analytical procedures applied in arriving at the estimate.

b. Make recommendations to the National Security Council for coordination of such intelligence activities as relate to national security.

COMMENT: Much of the foregoing commentary applies equally well to this statutory responsibility. The important point to be made here is that CIA clearly recognized the difficulties of coordinating many separate photographic intelligence activities as related to national security and therefore supported the recommendation that a National Photographic Interpretation Center be established for this and other reasons. NSCID #8, dated 18 January 1961, establishes the NPIC to ensure that the capabilities of the departments and agencies represented on the Intelligence Board are most efficiently utilized for the foreign intelligence exploitation of photography. Further, in centralizing this responsibility, the National Security Council directive states that the NPIC as a service of common concern shall be provided by the Director of Central Intelligence. Few national leaders, if any, have had any criticism of the NPIC (earlier CIA/PIC) joint photographic intelligence reporting and handling

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most productive intelligence programs ever embarked upon by the U.S. In fact, many commendation letters have been received in the DCI's office from satisfied consumers ranging from the White House and U.S. military commands to leaders in foreign governments. The Kirkpatrick Report, among many other things, confirmed the fact that CIA had demonstrated its ability to run an interagency photographic interpretation center.

c. Correlate and evaluate intelligence relating to national security.

COMMENT: Photography, as much if not more than any other resource, has become the yardstick by which information of physical nature is evaluated, confirmed, or denied. Therefore, photographic interpretation results from NPIC are prime ingredients used by CIA analysts in the process of evaluating intelligence related to national security. If the NPIC were not under the direct control of the DCI, it would be absolutely necessary to have a first class photographic intelligence division within CIA which could provide the details necessary for the DCI's evaluation and confirmation of ground information from other sources.

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d. Perform for the benefit of existing intelligence agencies such additional services of common concern as the NSC determines can be more efficiently accomplished centrally.

COMMENT: The NSC for this and other reasons has already rendered its judgment confirming CIA control of NPIC in NSCID #8. Many other services of common concern could be cited here ranging from such tasks as briefing a foreign chief of state, providing support for overseas tactical intelligence reporting, providing aerial plots, film evaluations and operational support, providing a central film repository, assisting DOD and CIA in planning future collection systems, coordinating and administering a joint R & D and procurement program involving highly specialized optical-mechanical equipment valued at millions of dollars with considerable savings to the government on unit costs because of combined CIA-Service contracted procurement and many other tasks. All of these functions have been executed in such a manner under CIA control that a whole new ordering of efficiency has entered the U.S. photographic intelligence process. The Cuban story is just one tip of the iceberg. Another tip showed in May of 1960 when even the Soviets were impressed with the advanced quality of U.S. aerial photography. Other tips might be traced backward in the inversion of the so-called

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ment policy which faces a Soviet strategy of local incidents and surprise aggressions. We are forced to meet this with an increasingly mobile "fire department" technique, with limited forces holding the line at widely separated danger zones across the world. Advance knowledge is of the essence in this conflict of maneuver. Of all developments to date, photography is capable of providing the greatest density of information in the shortest time compared to all other collection media. CIA has clearly shown that it understands the business of aerial reconnaissance and photographic intelligence and that it is capable of managing it for the common good of all. Any investigators of the evolution of U.S. aerial reconnaissance intelligence systems from 1950 to 1956 might be surprised and not too happy with some parts of the U.S. record - particularly as they relate to systems of information control, handling of requirements and lack of provision for services of common concern.

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3. In conclusion, I would offer my personal view and recommendation after more than twenty years experience in the field that photographic intelligence is right at the very core of national intelligence and that the NPIC must be directed by CIA if it is to properly discharge its statutory responsibilities. With the NPIC removed from its control, CIA would have to establish a strong independent photographic intelligence capability to handle its several statutory responsibilities already cited plus other departmental P.I. work and support of its clandestine services.

After working either as a military photo interpretation officer, in military P.I. organizations or with military P.I. officers, since 1942 I've had ample opportunity to observe, make comparisons and draw conclusions. Most of the finest photo interpreters I know came from military organizations. In fact, most of the civilian photo interpreters at NPIC were once military officers. Their opinions also reinforce mine in that we prefer to seek a career in a civilian organization. Despite a respect for military training and experience, we feel that much remains to be done to establish incentives for military careers in intelligence. Too often, as the Beacon Hill Report noted, "almost anyone can be an intelligence officer". A man who failed as a navigator after months of training might find himself transferred to intelligence where he is expected to make

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good with no training. The most important attribute of the finest interpreter beyond his keen eyes, I.Q., curiosity, and hard work is continuity of experience. Years of dedicated digging into specific subjects and/or geographic areas sharpen the P.I.'s perception to that required for top performance. Frequently in a military controlled P.I. organization the bright and promising P.I. officers are swept out by rotation. New inexperienced personnel arrive as replacements. However, the photo interpretation problems have not been correspondingly decreased in number or complexity.

Training, continuity of experience and an attractive career incentive are required in the photographic intelligence field as practiced at the NPIC. CIA is presently in the best position to provide most of these needs.

ARTHUR C. LUNDAHL  
Director

National Photographic Interpretation Center

cc: DDCI

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**June 28, 1961**

**NATIONAL SECURITY ACTION MEMORANDUM NO. 57**

**TO:**  
The Secretary of State  
The Secretary of Defense  
The Director, CIA

The President has approved the attached recommendation.

The Special Group (5412 Committee) will perform the functions assigned in the recommendation to the Strategic Resources Group.

**McGeorge Bundy**

**cc: General Maxwell D. Taylor**

(Note: This copy typed by EO/DCI, 29 June 61.)

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